Conference on Disarmament

11 September 2018

Original: English

Note Verbale dated 7 September 2018 from the Permanent Missions of Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America addressed to the Secretariat of the Conference on Disarmament, transmitting the text of their joint statement concerning the Presidency of the Syrian Arab Republic of the Conference on Disarmament in view of its repeated violations of international law including the Chemical Weapons Convention and United Nations Security Council resolutions

The Permanent Missions of Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America to the United Nations in Geneva present their compliments to the Office for Disarmament Affairs, in its capacity as the secretariat of the Conference on Disarmament, and have the honour to circulate the text of their joint statement concerning the Presidency of the Syrian Arab Republic of the Conference on Disarmament in view of its repeated violations of international law including the Chemical Weapons Convention and United Nations Security Council resolutions.

The Permanent Missions of Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America to the United Nations in Geneva request that the attached joint statement be registered and circulated as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament.

The Permanent Missions of Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America to the United Nations in Geneva avail themselves of this opportunity to renew to the Office for Disarmament Affairs, in its capacity as the secretariat of the Conference on Disarmament, the assurances of their highest consideration.

GE.18-14986(E)

1814986

Please recycle

Joint statement of Australia, Austria (on behalf of the European Union), Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America concerning the Presidency of the Syrian Arab Republic of the Conference on Disarmament in view of its repeated violations of international law including the Chemical Weapons Convention and United Nations Security Council resolutions

1. In view of the Syrian Arab Republic's repeated violations of its non-proliferation obligations, and its overwhelming responsibility for prolonging the Syrian conflict, which has entered its eighth year of continuous and widespread violence with persistent and brutal violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, we profoundly regret that the Syrian Arab Republic assumed the Presidency of the Conference on Disarmament in May-June 2018.

2. We recall that in accordance with rule 9 to the Rules of Procedure, the Presidency of the Conference on Disarmament rotates among all its members in alphabetical order. We respect the rules and procedures of the Conference. In our view, however, the Syrian regime did not have the necessary legitimacy to perform this function. A country that is not complying with its non-proliferation obligations should not be in a position to preside over meetings of the world's single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum.

3. As a State Party to the Chemical Weapons Convention, negotiated in the Conference on Disarmament, the Syrian Arab Republic has explicitly obligated itself not to possess, develop or use chemical weapons. We strongly condemn the repeated use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Armed Forces in at least four cases, as confirmed by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)/ United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism. We also condemn all the cases of chemical weapons use reported by the Commission of Inquiry.

4. The Syrian Arab Republic also remains non-compliant with its Safeguards Agreement under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). We deplore the Syrian Arab Republic's lack of commitment to resolve all outstanding issues in full cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency and call on the Syrian Arab Republic to sign and ratify the Additional Protocol to its NPT Safeguards Agreement without delay.

5. It was not business as usual during the Presidency of the Syrian Arab Republic. Our delegations spoke out against the Syrian Arab Republic assuming this role. A number of us also limited our participation in the Conference on Disarmament during the Presidency of the Syrian Arab Republic, and at least one of us decided not to participate after the first plenary of the Presidency.

6. We wish these concerns to be reflected in the annual report of the Conference on Disarmament to the United Nations General Assembly.